Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups

Basic Information

Title	Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups
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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	To approve the completion schedule for the initial phase of the Review of Committees and the recommendations for future work
Draft Resolution	• That the Council accepts the Review of Committees as complete (with final implementation of legacy work in 2010-2011) • That the Council recommends that the Conference establishes a new compliance monitoring process, overseen by the Secretary for Internal Relationships. • That the Council recommends that the Conference commission the Team to extend the principles of the Review of Committees to the broader range of groups and committees that serve the Methodist Church

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To update the Council regarding the final phase of the Review of Committees and to suggest how the principles followed by the Review may be embedded in the ongoing work of the Connexion.
Main Points	The Team has now completed the review as originally requested, though some work will not be formally agreed with groups until 2010-2011. This paper recommends the creation of an ongoing monitoring process overseen by the Secretary for Internal Relationships.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Methodist Conference 2007 Resolution 41/4. Council papers April 2008 MC/08/49; February 2010 MC/10/05. The Council has given the authority to determine future outcomes of the groups to the Secretary for Internal Relationships unless it involves a matter of substantive principle.
Consultations	The Connexional Team & all groups supporting the work of the Team.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Several changes to Standing Orders have been drafted as a consequence of the Review of Committees, specifically in Equalities & Diversity framework and the Heritage Committee. These are described in detail in the relevant reports to this Council.
Financial	Re-structuring groups to maximise their effectiveness in fulfilling their functions promises to increase efficiency and cut costs.
Wider Connexional	The reduction of unnecessary travel which the Review of Committees requires will support the ecological strategy embodied in Hope in God's Future, particularly through cutting Carbon emissions.
Risk	Failure to conclude this phase of the work and move on to a policy of ongoing monitoring risks hindering the effective work of groups and delaying cost savings.

Review of Committees

1. Introduction

1.1 The report to the Methodist Council in February 2010 [MC/10/05] set out a distinction between
   a. bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council (and which are normally established in Standing Orders); and
   b. bodies which advise the Conference and the Council and/or support the work of members of the Connexional Team (to whom any decision-making authority has been delegated by the Conference or the Council).

The report indicated that it was hoped to bring to the April Council lists of groups to be identified as falling under heading (b) above, together with recommendations as to which of the new categories of body they are to be assigned in the future. (These are contained in Appendix 1 of the present report.)

1.2 The February meeting of the Council also resolved:
   1. *that the nomenclature and ways of working adopted by the Team since April 2008.... be formally adopted as baseline standards for the future functioning of all groups and committees, and that appropriate recommendations to that effect be made to the Conference.*
   2. *that the final stage of review should consider whether any new categories of groups or committees might be required.*

The results of these considerations and some proposed amendments to the list of categories and their definitions can be found in Section 3 below, along with an update on the general progress of the Review.

1.3 Information and, in some cases, recommendations can be found in Section 4, focusing on the work on Heritage Committee. The Review is also relevant to other parts of the Team's ongoing work around Equality and Diversity; Property and other issues connected with the review of the Resourcing Mission Office; and work on the Ministries Committee, concerning the bodies concerned with policy for and the oversight of the selection, training, authorisation, stationing and development of presbyters and deacons. Full accounts of this work are being presented in other papers submitted to this Council and this report refers to that work.

2. Nomenclature

2.1 The report to the February Council identified the following categories of groups for use in the future.
   (a) Decision-making Committees
   (b) Reference Groups
   (c) Scrutiny Groups
   (d) Stakeholders Forums
   (e) Practitioners Forums
   (f) Resource Groups
   (g) Open Networks

2.2   The report to the February Council also suggested that the type of bodies outlined in paragraph 1.1 (a) above are likely to fall under heads (a), (b) and (c); whereas those in 1.1 (b) are likely to fall under (d) to (g) inclusive. However, further review suggests that category (f) Resource Groups might either be given an independent authority as in 1 (a) or be appointed by the Connexional Team to support its work as in 1 (b), and that the title ought therefore to be "Resource or Working Groups". Moreover, the tasks given to such groups are sometimes not time-limited in the sense of being one-off events, but, say, annual or repeating events.

2.3   Further review also suggests that a distinction needs to be made between who authorises that the group exists and who appoints its members. Neither applies to Open Networks which are, by definition, open. In categories (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) the existence of the group should be authorised by the Conference or the Council [with many of those in (a) being codified in Standing Orders]. In category (f) the Resource or Working Group may be authorised either by the Conference/Council or by the Connexional Team.

2.4   The Conference or the Council should appoint the members of the groups in categories (a), (b), (c) and (d). With regard to (e) Practitioners' Forums, the Conference or Council should either state that all those holding a particular office in the relevant area of practice should be able to attend, or, if the group is to be representative, should appoint the named members. With regard to (f) Resource or Working Groups either the Conference/Council or the Team should appoint the members as appropriate.

2.5   In the light of the above, the categories and definitions to be presented to the Conference are as follows:

(a)   **Committees** authorised by the Conference or the Council (often codified in Standing Orders) and appointed by the same.

Committees are standing groups appointed by the Conference or the Council and delegated to make decisions on its behalf. The decision-making remit means that Committees benefit from face-to-face meetings; however, some contact can be undertaken electronically.

(b)   **Reference Groups** authorised and appointed by the Conference or the Council

Conference Reference Groups are likely to have one representative from each of the districts and other main constituencies of the Conference membership. They are asked to explore issues in a complex Conference report and make their own report to the Conference to expedite the Conference's work.

Council Reference Groups usually have five members. Their role is to consider in detail reports to the Council on complex issues from any part of the Connexional Team or a working group that reports to the Council; and make recommendations to the Council as a whole.

(c)   **Scrutiny Groups** authorised and appointed by the Council

Scrutiny Groups are established by the Council to undertake detailed analysis of reports on its behalf on matters relating to formal processes, trusteeship and finance. Scrutiny Groups consist of 3-4 persons with appropriate experience and include within their membership one person who is independent of both the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee.

(d) **Stakeholders' Forums** authorised and appointed by the Council

Stakeholders' Forums are established by the Council and comprise a maximum of 12 persons with experience and expertise in a particular area of the Church's work (for example, Methodists within Higher Education and students). They will include Christian practitioners from that area of work. The Stakeholders' Forum facilitates discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from the Stakeholders' Forum and assess their priority within the Connexional Team's work and budgets. Stakeholders' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.

(e) **Practitioners Forums** authorised by the Council and with their members being either ex officio or appointed by the Council.

Practitioners' Forums are established by the Council and comprise of practitioners with similar responsibilities within the Church, (for example, Higher Education Chaplains). The Practitioners' Forum facilitates learning and development, fellowship and discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from Practitioners' Forum and assess their priority within the Connexional Team's work and budgets. Practitioners' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.

(f) **Resource Groups** authorised by the Conference, Council, other body or the Connexional Team.

Resource Groups are established to undertake a clearly defined and often time-limited piece of work on its behalf. (For example, provide a resource pack, provide advice on a new initiative, and undertake a piece of consultation with the wider network.) Resource Groups comprise of a maximum of 12 persons with appropriate experience and expertise, and are likely to be recruited from existing forums, committees and networks. Accountability for a Resource Group is to the authorising body. Connexional Team support for the Resource Group (financial and HR) is to be agreed with the Team or directed by Council or Conference.

(g) **Open Networks**

Open Networks are groups of persons with an interest and varying degrees of experience in a particular area that communicate electronically in an ad hoc manner to share information and experience, hold discussion, explore new ideas and provide mutual support. Members of Networks need not be in direct contact with each other.

3. Recent Work in the Concluding Phase of the Review

3.1   The current phase of the Review identified 99 groups and committees actively involved with the Team. Of these, the Team oversees or otherwise guides the work of 58, and twenty of this subset involve Standing Orders.

These groups can also be divided into those 29 that answer directly to the Team, and the remainder, which report to the Council or the Conference, or are ecumenical bodies. Analysis of these 29, which are listed in Appendix 1, reveals a number of generic issues resulting in the key findings for this phase of work (described in points 3.2-3.8 below).

The Team has completed the Review process for 26 of these 29 groups and 18 of these have made the transition to their new form. The Team has developed future scenarios for the other eight in line with the principles of the Review, but the groups concerned have not yet had an opportunity to meet and agree or revise the scenario (these are described as 'negotiating' in the table in Appendix 1).

The three groups not yet reviewed by the Team require a different approach to the others listed, and the Review recommends that they be addressed separately under the new process suggested in paragraph 3.8 below.

3.2   In the early stages of the Review, it became clear that a large number of groups with or without independent decision-making powers had remits that were connected to Standing Orders, not always very accurately. Separation of groups into routine Review and the major reorganizations described in Section 4 below clarified the relationship to Standing Orders in each case. There are only three groups answerable to the Team whose future role requires any change to Standing Orders:

- It is planned that the **Aldersgate Memorial Committee** should be subsumed in the Wesley Chapel Circuit Meeting. This will involve modifying SO 211.
- The **Epworth Press Editorial Committee** is now known as the Epworth Press Editorial Board, and defined as a Resource Group. This will require modification of SO 243.
- **The Lay Workers Advisory Committee** should transition to become the Lay Workers Stakeholders Forum. This will touch on SO 327, although that Standing Order does not mention the Advisory Committee which is ceasing to meet.

As a general rule, Standing Orders should only be used for precise specification of the particular function of an independent decision-making body, (as implied by the definition of committee in paragraph 2.5 above). As groups may require future review, Standing Orders should be flexible, minimally specific, and able to be adapted without undue complication if necessary.

There may be rare exceptions to this general rule – see the Committee for Racial Justice below, where there is argument for the exceptional action of using a SO for aspirational purposes.

3.3   During the course of the Review, around 40 groups have ended through natural completion of their work, or as a direct result of the early stages of the Review. Others have formed in response to calls for new work.

Team members have become used to following the ways of working and nomenclature in creating new groups. Subsequent performance analysis of these groups will help assess the success of the Review's principles. There are three main new groups
- The Music Resources Group: this supports the new hymnbook and has five sub-groups (Content Selection Group; Devotional Resource Group; Appendices, Indexes & Notes Group; Music Arrangements Group; Production & Marketing Group). It is also connected to the Rolling Resource Group (starting in March 2010)
- Faith sharing Resource Group: a time limited group created for one project and now completing
- Consents Process Resource Group: to support the newly launched Consents Process

It is important that time-limited groups are set up with clear Terms of Reference and in accordance with the principles of the Review. Without this, it is difficult to assess the performance of these short-lived groups and extract learning from them.

The Review had also noted certain groups which on closer examination turned out not to be groups or committees, but essentially 'meetings' (thus not listed in Appendix 1). These include the District Probationers Secretaries Group and the Methodist Oversight Tutors Group. Whilst these fall outside the original remit, the Review implies that all such regular 'meetings', that are supported by the Team's budget and interact with the Team, should be named in accordance with the nomenclature and follow the ways of working for groups and committees.

3.4 Many groups' work cuts across organizational structures both within and beyond the Connexional Team. The Team has been able to rationalise the chain of accountability through its progress on the major work areas (see Section 4 below). Initially, it was suspected that these complex groups might not fit into the agreed nomenclature, but work to date hasn't supported this fear.

Two groups on the list were identified as not having a clear and accountable authority. One of these, the District Property Secretaries Group, has met for the last time. If it is reformed in the future, it is expected it would become an open network. The other, the Investment Management Committee, is included on the list because work within the Team is involved in resolving its status.

There are also a number of ecumenical groups, which fall outside the scope of the Review, such as the Creation Challenge Coordinating Group (CCCG), Rural Strategy Group, and Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM). The broader rollout of the Review principles should ensure that Methodist work in these groups follows the principles. For example, the CCCG is a resource group and should be treated as such from the Methodist side.

3.5 As anticipated when the Review began, many groups' status is nebulous. This made it difficult to assess exactly how many groups exist at any one time, and what constitutes a completed review. It is now clear that in future groups and committees which interact with the Team will need to be under regular review, and a process to ensure this needs to be put in place.

As noted in the report to the Feb 2010 Council, the extensive work in 2009 effectively trialed the proposed nomenclature and ways of working, which now needs to be formalized. Several groups have already adjusted their ways of working informally, e.g. by reducing their annual number of meetings. This is the reason for some groups, such as the Methodist European Reference Group, being described as 'negotiating' their future. The Team and groups have developed new scenarios in consultation, making greater use of electronic working. But the reduced number of physical meetings means that some groups have not had the opportunity to reach formal agreement regarding their new future. The Team appreciates the hard work and patience of all groups and committees which have participated in the Review process and are as yet awaiting final resolution at their next meetings.

3.6 One cause for concern in previous working practices was the number of 'quasi groups' identified by the Review. By the middle of the process, the Team had an extensive list of names of groups some of which no longer existed, some of which were unknown to the Team, some of which duplicated other groups and some of which were multiple names for the same actual group.

In the past, groups have sometimes been established semi-formally as a good idea but not necessarily put into action. In some cases this has challenged the Team to define whether a group really existed or really ceased, for example there was a 'Catechesis Resource Working Party' which never met and whose proposed functions are fully represented by other workstreams.

To avoid this situation, the Review recommends that Connexional staff exercise caution before even creating a name, let alone a defined group. Once a project begins to be reified by being named, it should be developed from its beginning according to the Ways of Working. This is important to ensure that work done is accountable and following strategic priorities.

One useful example of this grey area between 'usual work' of Methodist employees and/or volunteers is the category of 'open networks'. As mentioned above, the District Property Secretaries' Group is ceasing, and may transition to being an Open Network. The decision to terminate the group in the first instance was correct, and in line with Team Focus and the Review. Likewise, the Lay Workers Advisory Committee has already ceased to exist, but it may be recreated as an Open Network later.

Any collection of individuals can communicate electronically, or even create an informal web forum. The term 'Open Network' should be preserved for groups which have a more specific relation to the work of the Team and the Church. This is necessary to preserve the significance of the Open Network as a way of ensuring inclusiveness and the fast sharing of ideas and experiences.

3.7   The report to the Feb 2010 Council expressed the need to check that the nomenclature is an accurate and sufficient encapsulation of the kinds of group that exist in the Connexion. Work since then has found that the nomenclature is, in general, fully adequate for descriptive purposes. But its use may result in a title which makes for inelegant 'branding', or is otherwise inapplicable.

For example, it is unreasonable to expect an ecumenical group like the Creation Challenge Coordination Group to have a title governed by Connexional nomenclature. Likewise, the Epworth Press Editorial Board is a Resource Group, but this does not need to be expressed in its public facing title.

There are two exceptions to the applicability of previous definitions of the nomenclature. The NM31 Group became the Countering Political Extremism Resource Group, and its Terms of Reference were presented to the Feb 2010 Council. It is clearly a Resource Group, but although its remit is defined, it is not time-limited in the same way as the previous definition of Resource Group. This necessitated the modification to the definitions presented in paragraph 2.5 above.

Likewise, the Team envisages that the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, a long-running and valued group, should become the Listed Buildings Stakeholders' Forum. It is in theory possible that this will involve the need for redefinition of the nomenclature, but this process has been on hold because LBAC has been involved in the Resourcing Mission Office's review.

If other groups chose to brand themselves with an arbitrary name, the Review needs to ensure that they have Terms of Reference which specify their remit and function in line with the nomenclature.

3.8   The objective of 'reviewing' committees and of ensuring that they comply with the standards identified by the Reference Group has been met. At this point, it is important to draw the line under this piece of work, to avoid a counterproductive state of 'endless review'. **The Team has completed its work on the Review of Committees**, with a handful of minor exceptions that go beyond what was originally envisaged. However, implementation of the major changes described in Section 4 below cannot be completed until the coming Connexional year.

Some new groups still lack Terms of Reference due to their recent creation. It is important that all groups have Terms of Reference, and their work monitored and assessed to ensure compliance and improve the nomenclature and Ways of Working as necessary.

The Secretary of Internal Relationships should oversee the development of the ongoing monitoring process, in consultation with Personnel & Development and other involved Team staff.

In particular there is at present no sensible way of measuring whether the aim of cutting costs is being met. The new standard policy of limiting groups to one physical meeting per year and making enhanced use electronic communication the rest of the time aims to reduce costs and result in more efficient and inclusive working practices. However, the Review is aware that the traditional regime of groups arose in response to work that the Conference requires, and the success of the new policy in achieving the Conference's goals will have to be reviewed in two years' time.

4.   Key Work Areas and Standing Order Changes

4.1   The Heritage Committee

This section contains a summary of the rationale for the reorganisation of the various groups and committees involved in heritage which is described in full in the report on Methodist Heritage Committee going to this Council. Notably, The Archives and History Committee will cease to exist as a separate body. Therefore there will be relevant changes to the Terms of Reference to allow for the membership of the Methodist Heritage Committee to retain the skill and experience of the Archives and History Committee. Some groups are being retained and others will cease and be replaced by new groups, in line with the nomenclature and Review principles.

4.1.1 Retained Groups

- Heritage Forum, renamed the Heritage Sites' Network (HSN)
- District Archivists' Conference, renamed the Connexional Archivists' Network (CAN)

Both of these changes illustrate the usefulness of the category of Open Networks. The HSN will be virtual community for all involved in Methodist Heritage, particularly those managing smaller historical sites. The CAN performs a similar role for those involved in archives. District Archivists are designated in Standing Orders, but the Heritage Committee report will be describing proposed amendments to make the system more workable and flexible.

Both of these Open Networks will also be meeting once per year: the network structure will be informing a meeting, and this is in line with paragraph 3.6 above which notes that an Open Network must be a more purposive entity than a mere sharing of information electronically.

4.1.2 Replaced Groups

The Archives and History Committee Task Groups – (Connexional Records, Local Archives & Oral History, and Sites & Museums) – will cease and be replaced by
-          Records Practitioners' Forum (RPF)
-          Heritage Site Managers' Practitioners' Forum (HSMPF)
-          Conservation Experts Network

The RPF will draw on expertise in Connexional records management and the archiving of historical documents at Connexional and District level. Practitioners' Forums typically meet once per year, but this group will meet twice per year in line with its aim of providing timely and robust advice. The HSMPF will

encourage development of and collaboration between the 4 key site managers and curators, and also the visitor services manager of WCH. Both of these are representative uses of the Practitioners Forum category, and it will be important to monitor their working in assessing the Review of Committees.

4.1.3   New Group - Heritage Content Forum

This will be a mainly virtual editorial panel, with the possibility of one annual meeting, "to ensure accurate and consistent historical and theological content for our displays and publications".

As noted above, this is an example of a group whose name does not fully reflect its function. It is an Open Network, and its Terms of Reference will need to align its function to the nomenclature listed in Section 1 above.

4.2   Other Work Areas Significantly Involved with the Review of Committees

Reports on the 3 other key work areas can be found elsewhere in the agenda of this Council:

- **The Ministries Committee:** a description of this work can be found in the Ministries, Learning and Development report

- **The Equalities & Diversity Framework:** a report on recent work in this area containing the vision for the new E&D framework has been submitted

- **Connexional Property and related issues:** the findings of the report of the Connexional Manses Trustees will be relevant to the next stage of the Review

5.   Conclusion

5.1   Supplementary Findings and Recommendations

Policies for monitoring membership must be established with Personnel and the process of the creation and maintenance of groups scrutinised. More work needs to be done to ensure groups are known across the Connexion, sufficiently publicised and inclusive.

References in Standing Orders to groups not intended to be decision-making bodies should be sparing.

5.2   Resolutions

1. **That the Council recommends that the Conference establishes a new compliance monitoring process, overseen by the Secretary for Internal Relationships.**
2. **That the Council accepts the Review of Committees as complete (with final implementation of agreed work in 2010-2011)**
3. **That the Council recommends that the Conference commission the Team to extend the principles of the Review of Committees to the broader range of groups and committees that serve the Methodist Church**

Appendix 1 – Groups Reviewed in the Current Phase of the Review of Committees

Previous Name of Group	Review Complete?	New Name	Kind of Group (if not explicit	Comments
Abortion Statement Revision Committee	Yes	Abortion Statement		
Aldersgate Memorial Committee	Negotiating			Incorporate into Wesley Chapel Circuit Meeting - SO 221 requires revision
Business and Economic Affairs Advisory Group	Yes	Business and Economic Affairs	Stakeholders' Forum	Meeting once per year + shared meeting with MIBIC
CELL Network Group/Committee	No			Review to be taken forward under new monitoring
Epworth Press Editorial Committee	Negotiating	Epworth Press Editorial Board	Resource Group	SO 243 – requires revision
Epworth Review Committee	No			Not in current scope of Review, but Team acknowledge need to review
Evangelism Strategy Group	Yes	Evangelism Stakeholders'		
Faithsharing Resource Group (new group)	Yes - group finishing	Faithsharing Resource Group		Time limited group for one project now almost complete
Methodist European Reference Group (MERG)	Negotiating		Open Network	Proposed that will transition to network and meet once per year
Momentum Editorial Group	Yes - group finishing			Will cease after final edition
Momentum Steering Group	Yes - group finishing			Will cease after final edition
Music Resource Group	Yes - no change			Composed of several sub-groups to support the new Hymn resource
NM31 Group	Yes	Countering Political		Yes-appointed by Council but working with Team
Prayer Handbook Committee	Yes	Prayer Handbook Resource Group		
Urban Mission Strategy Group / Urban	Yes - group finishing			Final meeting in April
World Church Committee	Negotiating	World Mission Stakeholders		Initially renamed World Mission Forum
Mission in Business, Industry & Commerce Chaplains Council	Yes		Practitioners' Forum	Answerable to Team through Chaplaincies Coordinator.

Connexional Higher Education Committee	Yes			Reports to the Connexional Team through the Chaplaincies Coordinator
Lay Workers Advisory Committee	Negotiating	Lay Workers' Stakeholders' Forum		SO 327 - but this does not deem the committee essential
Methodist Connexional Day Schools Committee	Negotiating		Committee & Stakeholder Forum	Small core committee and larger Stakeholder forum until the recommendations
The Diaconal Committee	No			Review to be taken forward under new monitoring
The Forces Board	Yes - no change			
Consents Process Resource Group	Yes - new group			
District Lay Employment	Negotiating		Practitioners' Forum	Depends on D&M work around Ministries
District Property Secretaries Group	Yes - group finishing		Open Network?	Previously it was not clear who this group reported to. If reformed later, might become open network
District Treasurers' Meeting	Yes	District Treasurers'		
Investment Management Committee	Yes - no change			Not clear who this group reports to – may need review if in scope
Lay Employees' Advisory Committee	Yes - group finishing			Has met for the last time. SO 327 refers
Listed Buildings Advisory Committee	Negotiating	Listed Buildings Stakeholders' Forum		Yes - finalisation depends on findings of RMO review. SO 332, SO 982 need revision